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Title ‘Good relations’ among neighbours and workmates? The everyday encounters of Accession 8 migrants and established communities in urban England.

Authors: Joanne Cook (University of Stirling), Peter Dwyer (Nottingham Trent University) and Louise Waite (University of Leeds),

ABSTRACT

Drawing on data generated in a recently completed qualitative study in a northern, English city this paper explores the everyday social encounters of Accession 8 (A8) migrants who entered the UK following the expansion of the European Union in 2004. A number of options from permanent residence in another Member State on the one hand, to more fleeting circulatory and multiple short-term moves on the other, now exist for these new European citizens. The relatively short-term and temporary residence of some A8 migrants calls into question the focus of much UK government policy which emphasises the need for migrants to integrate into diverse yet cohesive communities. Against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is two-fold. First, it considers what the somewhat different character of A8 migration (a spectrum from permanency to temporariness) means for routine experiences of mixing between new migrants and established host communities. Second, the paper explores such interactions in terms of ‘everyday encounters’ in both neighbourhood and work spaces and asks whether such spatio-temporal practices and experiences enhance or inhibit the building of ‘good relations’ in a multicultural city.

KEY WORDS

A8 migration, integration, neighbourhood, mixing, good relations and everyday encounters.

INTRODUCTION

Enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004 brought rights to live and work in the UK for nationals of the Accession 8 (A8) countries¹. Various factors, such as a sustained period of economic growth (which has now ended in the light of global recession), a favourable disparity in wage earning potential between A8 migrants’ countries of origin and the UK, and a comparatively low and differentiated (regressive) tax system, have made Britain an attractive proposition for A8 migrants looking to exercise their new right to freedom of movement as EU citizens (Stenning *et al.* 2006). Since 2004, Pollard *et al* (2008) estimate that in excess of one million Central and Eastern European migrants have arrived in the UK. However, many of these migrants exhibit different mobility characteristics to the significant past waves of migrants that preceded them. Many A8 migrants are not permanent settlers and prefer instead to avail of an era of ‘super-mobility’ (Rutter *et al*, 2008) to temporarily or seasonally migrate between the UK and their homeland; often more than once (Ryan *et al*, 2009). Such itinerant presence in UK communities has led to the well-noted phenomena of enhanced ‘population churn’ in some host communities leading Pollard *et al* (2008) to invoke a ‘turnstile’ rather than a ‘floodgate’ imagery of contemporary A8 migration.

The growth, increased diversity and occurrence of more transitory migration flows into Britain poses new questions and challenges for heterogeneous cities and multicultural/cosmopolitan/hybridⁱⁱ living (Simonsen, 2008a). The ‘integration’ of migrants into pluralistic yet cohesive communities is an issue that is of great concern to the UK government and social scientistsⁱⁱⁱ (Home Office, 2005; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007; Cattle, 2001; Zetter et al, 2006). This preoccupation has arguably intensified in recent years with both the expansion of the EU and an environment of enhanced ‘migration securitisation’ in a post 9-11 world. In the current policy environment migrant integration is actively encouraged; community integration, cohesion and citizenship policies seek to strengthen people’s sense of belonging in order to foster ‘good relations’. Yet in an era of migration securitisation suspicions of ‘exclusionary integration’ abound which relate to fears that intra-community bonds and their social and spatial manifestation in terms of *self-segregation* may impede cohesion. The noted shift away from the tendency of earlier waves of migrants to permanently settle in the UK towards A8 migrants exhibiting mobility behaviour anywhere along a continuum from permanency to ‘temporariness’ (Bailey *et al*, 2002) has further implications for this tension at the heart of migration that is, arguably, poorly understood (Manzo, 2005; Rudiger, 2005). As many A8 migrants are now resident in urban communities that are already relatively diverse a key question is; has their arrival led to the development of cohesive multi-ethnic communities of difference, or is it more the case that new A8 migrants and established communities routinely exist as internally cohesive but segregated groups who share the same neighbourhood?

In both policy and academic circles the community and neighbourhood have emerged as prominent spaces that are purported to shape new arrivals’ settlement and integration experiences (e.g. Burholt, 2004, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). Yet another sometimes overlooked site of significance is the work-place; a space that many new migrants spend much of their everyday lives labouring in. These different spaces are considered important for integration because they are generative of multiple, varied and diverse types of *encounters* that emerge between new and established individuals in neighbourhoods and workplaces. The way that these encounters manifest themselves and ‘play out’ in people’s lives can therefore influence and shape what are often somewhat crudely referred to as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ social relations between new and established community members.

Within social science there are interesting discussions around multifarious ‘encounters’ in social landscapes of difference that characterise modern cities (e.g. Keith, 2005; Simonsen, 2008b). Cities are envisioned as particular places of encounter, “as spatial formations resulting from dense networks of interaction, and as places of meeting ‘the stranger’” (Simonsen, 2008b:145). The challenge is how this ‘being-togetherness’ in urban space can create encounters marked by ‘cultures of care and regard’ against the backdrop of communities continually changing from the ebb and flow of migration (Amin, 2006:1012-3). Debates around the ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ loom large however (Back *et al*, 2002; Phillips, 2006; Kundnani, 2007; Modood, 2008), and are linked to Valentine’s (2008) concern as to how encounters between diverse people may emerge as constructive and offer the potential to erode prejudice in multicultural contexts rather than merely acting to ossify intolerance in landscapes of difference.

Allied terms such as ‘civility’ (Fyfe *et al*, 2006) are also invoked when imagining ‘good community relations’, and indeed this discourse is seen in the recent Commission on Integration and Cohesion’s report entitled ‘Our Shared Future’ (2007) with its new emphasis on ‘mutual respect and civility’. Boyd (2006:863) discusses the potential of civility in terms of, “easing social conflicts and facilitating social interactions” and as a way of communicating respect for others. Amin (2006:1012) further feels that although often unattained, civility has the potential to encourage a ‘politics of living together’ in cities. Although certain types of courteous or convivial behaviour for example, holding doors open for people, communicating pleasantries etc. (cf. Laurier *et al*, 2002) may be critiqued as being superficial and unlikely to generate meaningful encounters, other writers link such behaviour to a culture of ‘hospitality’ that arguably permeates cities and enables the positive transformation of urban public culture (Nava, 2006; Bell, 2007).

Such arguments around civility, hospitality and the importance of exploring people’s encounters are often embedded within an analytical framework that acknowledges the importance of ‘the everyday’. In human geography it was Ley (1977) who first suggested close attention to the ordinary, everyday, and ‘mundane experiences’ of people’s lives, and de Certeau (1984) made significant contributions to this emerging field by stating that everyday social practices were critical for enhancing the ability of ordinary people to negotiate, and possibly resist, structural apparatuses of power. Lefebvre (1990) continues in this vein by writing that it is therefore mistaken to dismiss the everyday as abstract or inauthentic as it *is* the very stuff of real life. Such sentiments are echoed in the work of Harrison (2000), Seigworth & Gardiner (2004) and Binnie *et al* (2007) who all discuss the banal, mundane and everydayness not as ‘lacking’ but as full of potential and generative. In this sense, this paper pays close attention to the quotidian experiences of encounter that emerge for A8 migrants in neighbourhood and work spaces and therefore contributes to Halfacree and Boyle’s (1993) call for a conceptualization of migration which emphasizes its situatedness within everyday life.

The overall aim of this paper is two-fold. First, it considers what the somewhat different character of A8 migration, in terms of a range of mobility patterns from permanency to temporariness, mean for grounded experiences of interactions between new migrants and host communities. Second, the paper explores such interactions in terms of ‘everyday encounters’ in both neighbourhood and work spaces and continues to ask whether such spatio-temporal practices and experiences are generative or inhibitive of the building of ‘good relations’ between newly resident A8 migrants and established communities in a multicultural city. As such, the main body of the paper is structured into two sections. The first explores generative and positive mixing in neighbourhood and work spaces. The second uncovers a range of encounters in the same spaces from negative experiences and structurally enforced ‘absence’ of interaction through to more active strategies of withdrawal from encounter. Before addressing these issues in more detail, a brief contextualisation of the fieldwork location and an outline of the study on which this paper draws is required.

STUDY OUTLINE AND METHODS

The qualitative data utilised in this paper was generated in a research project that focused on the needs and experiences of new A8 migrants and established communities in a northern English city. The city in question has reinvented itself in the post-industrial era into an urban location of considerable renewal and prosperity. It is now characterised by a diverse and dynamic economy with tertiary sectors such as retail, call centres, offices and media being important to the labour market. The city also, however, has sizeable low-skilled and low-paid labour market sectors (i.e. hospitality, construction, manufacturing, food-processing) and the particular groups of workers in these sectors are more likely to experience the social inequalities that are often the underbelly of ostensibly prosperous cities. The parts of the city that are characterised by poverty, exclusion and multiple deprivation are unsurprisingly shaped by ethnic, racial and class dynamics, and the city's history of migration, particularly from the South Asian continent, has contributed to its current demographic profile. New, more recent, waves of immigration (including refugees and A8 migrants) have also led to greater diversity among the city's population.

Eighty nine people participated in the fieldwork. A series of focus group were held with members of three, newly resident, A8 migrant groups i.e. Polish, Slovak and Slovak Roma^{iv} migrants. Ten key informants who recruited, employed or acted as community support workers for A8 migrants were also interviewed. Additionally, four parallel focus groups were convened with members of the established West Indian, Pakistani (differentiated by gender) and 'white' host communities in neighborhoods that had recently experienced the arrival of significant numbers of A8 migrants. Finally, three focus groups were held with agencies involved in the provision and/or administration of local public services e.g. City Council services, primary care trusts, housing providers and schools^v.

Two basic principles, informed consent and anonymity, underpinned the fieldwork. Participant information and consent sheets were translated as necessary and participants were briefed about the aims of the research. Experienced interpreters were present at interviews as required. Interviews were routinely recorded on audiotape transcribed verbatim (translated into English by interpreters as appropriate), and analysed using grid analysis and thematic coding techniques (Mason, 2002; Ritchie and Spencer, 2003).

GENERATIVE AND POSITIVE ENCOUNTERS

As previously noted, some of the literature around encounters can be broadly characterised as optimistic in relation to positive types of social interaction and co-existence that multicultural cities may engender. Much of this thinking perhaps emanates from Allport's (1954) early 'contact hypothesis' of urban encounter and the consequent demystification of strangers. This is linked to the aforementioned writing on the fabric of civility that may, or may not, underlie urban encounters amongst diverse peoples (Laurier *et al*, 2002; Laurier & Philo, 2006) and further suggests a culture of hospitality may govern interactions (Derrida, 2000; Dicek, 2002; Barnes, 2005).

Neighbourhood mixing

Members of the established West Indian community who participated in our study echoed the above views and outlined serendipitous and positive accounts of mundane neighbourhood encounters with new A8 migrants, linking these interactions to broad notions of newcomer acceptance. As such their stance chimes with Amin's (2006) suggestion that care and regard for 'others' should be central to encounters in the 'good city':

Respondent 1: There's always going to be difficulty right at the beginning. Until you start mingling with people it's difficult to have an inter-relationship with people. But sometimes you meet in the shops and you would say, you'd look and think, that face looks strange – hello, how are you? What are you looking for? How are you settling in? And things like that. You make yourself more like available to help them because of the experience that you had when you came here. I mean I try and do it that way. Because of the difficulty that we had when we arrived in the early 50s... If you see a strange face you try to make that face feel welcome.

Respondent 2: I think we ... accommodate more people at [Community Centre]. The most cosmopolitan place in [city name]... Oh yes, very accepting. (FG 7 established West Indian community)

Some of the A8 migrants in our study highlighted similar mixing with their new neighbours. Whilst such neighbourly interactions are perhaps not transformative (in terms of directly facilitating feelings of integration), the civil nature of banal encounters and kind 'acts of mutuality' (Thrift, 2005) with established community members living in their streets were seen as communicating respect (Boyd, 2006) and making a positive difference to everyday lives:

Sometimes we may have a chat [with neighbours] During Christmas time we shared the cards. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

[W]here we live now the whole street is English people and they are very polite, we are greeting each other and at Christmas I've got cards from my neighbours. (FG1 Slovak new migrants)

My neighbours have been very kind...They knew I could not speak English so she try to help me, slow speaking, hand movements so I could understand. (Roma family interview 3, mother)

Similarly, both established community members and A8 migrants further discussed notable spaces in their neighbourhoods that provided, and framed, certain encounters between diverse people with common needs or interests. Indicating the inevitable 'throwntogetherness' of places (see Massey, 2005), especially where interests are likely to overlap (Dines and Cattell, 2006), respondents spoke of different communities accommodating each other in schools, at nurseries and in one particular case in a gymnasium:

Interviewer: Have you got any contact with A8 migrants?

Respondent: Some. When anybody new comes in the school where my kids go they always do try to let the parents know that a child of this minority has come, just to let the kids know that if the child has got a different language just to be a bit more patient and that with them. (FG8 established white community).

My wife is going with the other kids with the neighbours to some child place. I think they will be going together to the nursery. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

I meet them [A8 migrants] in the gym. That is the one place that everybody gets on well because you have to because of what we do. [...] You get to know them like anybody. You get to know people, you weigh people up. You get to know people gradually. I found most of the Poles are OK. (FG8 established white community)

'Good' workplace encounters

Participants in our research also discussed workplace encounters between the more established local workforce and new A8 workers. Reflecting the fact that black and minority ethnic workers are over represented in the lower echelons of the UK paid labour market (Mason, 2000), many of the workplaces occupied by A8 migrants were typically already home to ethnically diverse workforces. In many ways therefore the multicultural working environments shared by established communities and A8 migrants were a microcosm of the city neighbourhoods that they lived in:

Eastern European, you name it... On induction day it's like the United Nations. It's really mixed... We actually did a survey last year and we had 27 languages on site. [KI8 food production company]

One of the employers interviewed in the study described the increasing amount of mixing that he observed between A8 migrants and established community workers:

It's like a greying at the edges but from both sides. So here [on diagram just sketched; pointing to the middle section of 2 slightly overlapping circles] we effectively get quite a lot of integration ...A classic example when one of my security guards says, I can say 12 words in Polish now. [...] In another example one of our Polish ladies was getting married. Fifty per cent of the guests that she invited were actually [city name] people. [...] What was nice was that, we have a social club and every year we have a Christmas party. You could see almost like a defrosting of the atmosphere. People who were out and out [region's name] republicans, as it were, actually started talking to them [A8 migrants]. (KI4 logistics/distribution company)

Some of the A8 migrants themselves also spoke of having broadly good relations with their new work colleagues. One male Polish participant talked of how 'the English workers respect us', he explained how:

They [the employer] brought us here because English people weren't able to make a product of required standard, product that you could sell ... English

respect us. They invited us to play cricket, golf. They organised entertainment once in a while. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

Another Polish respondent explained why he was happy at work and keen to stay in the city:

I think it is quite nice and a lot of societies what you can join. And they don't treat you as a person from a different country, but you get, like I'm a member of Aquatic Society in [city name]. Nobody is treating me like a person from Poland, I'm just one of the members. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

It must be noted, however, that the participants who indicated such positive workplace encounters were largely drawn from the Polish community who generally had better English language abilities and higher levels of educational attainment than the Slovaks and Roma (see also Eade *et al*, 2007). Allied to this an earlier wave of post-WWII Polish migration has led to a large and well-organised Polish community in the city in question with associated networks of support. These pre-existing networks of community support enhance the ability of some Polish workers to secure better paid employment and they subsequently appear to be willing to stay for longer periods of time in one work location; thus arguably aiding exposure to, and willingness to engage in, relations with established work colleagues.

The examples of positive mixing in neighbourhood and work spaces presented here could, perhaps, be dismissed as largely superficial encounters that arguably do little to generate the genuine integration of new A8 migrants, or erode the prejudice and hostility of some established community members (Valentine, 2008). However, such mundane and banal encounters should not be so easily discounted. Perhaps these 'mundane and situated' connections (Conradson and Latham, 2005) *do* have the potential to instigate more meaningful encounters, or at least serve as a useful first step in reducing the barriers that exist between new A8 migrants and established communities and serve to nurture future 'good relations' There is much discussion, particularly in policy circles, around whether meaningful encounters can be encouraged and/or facilitated through a more proactive management of encounters or the provision of events (Winstone, 1996; Norman, 1998; Allen and Cars, 2001). In this vein, some of the established community participants in our study had suggestions as to how to provide for more meaningful encounters; borne from slight frustration as to the lack of mixing with new migrants in their lives:

Interviewer: Do you think that these new migrants have any knowledge or awareness about your religion or culture?

Respondents 1 and 2: No, they don't know.

Interviewer: Do you know about theirs?

Respondents 2 and 3: No.

Respondent 1: How can we mix [with new migrants]? Like having a day where people from all religions get together, an open day.

Respondent 2: Yeah, we should meet and find out what happens in their religion and tell them what happens in our religion.

Respondent 1: I'm saying that we should have an open day where people can find out about each others religion/culture. We should have sessions at local

community centres and invite everyone from cross cultures to meet and discuss. (FG6 women, established Pakistani community)

Other participants (the white gym user previously noted, a local authority education service provider and a young, Roma man), further both commented on the potential of sport, most particularly football, in terms of its potential for a positive coming-togetherness of new migrants and established community members around a particular sporting endeavour. This chimes with Amin's (2002:970) discussion of 'micropublics' as potential spaces of cultural transgression and his exemplification of sports associations as intercultural places that can disrupt racial and ethnic stereotypes (see also Back *et al*, 2001; Bale, 2003).

The above discussions illustrate that the mundane encounters that occur between members of communities and newly arrived A8 migrants can to some extent promote at least tolerance and civility among diverse communities that share the same neighbourhoods and workspaces. However, perhaps the most dominant theme that was evidenced in our study was the extent to which many members of established and A8 communities lived essentially separated lives.

EXCLUSIVE ENCOUNTERS? SEGREGATED PLACES AND SELECTIVE WITHDRAWAL

This next section moves away from the more positive encounters considered above to discuss a more problematic set of relationships that exist between established communities and their newly arrived central and eastern European neighbours and workmates. Although people often shared the same physical space, members of both the established and A8 migrant communities we interviewed relayed numerous accounts that emphasised the cultural and ethnic distance between them leading to routinely unconnected everyday lives. The section begins by exploring the lack of meaningful mixing at the neighbourhood level, before moving on to consider the ways in which mundane workplace encounters may prevent the building of 'good relations' between new migrants and established community members.

Parallel lives? Separate communities within shared neighbourhoods

A theme identified by many participants in this research was that of propinquity – living side by side – but an absence of meaningful interaction and mixing between new migrants and established community members (see also Holland *et al*, 2007). Such a public discourse of 'parallel lives'^{vi} is of course heavily critiqued (Phillips, 2006; Simpson, 2007). The characterisation of the lives of A8 migrants and established community members resident in the same neighbourhood as entirely parallel with a complete absence of interaction is perhaps an unhelpful stylisation of social practice. To assert this would be to gloss over the nuanced nature of everyday social interactions that render complete bifurcation between different social groups highly unlikely for many people. Yet it must be acknowledged that spatial closeness may actually serve to create or entrench tensions between groups as strangers are brought 'close in' which may be a discomfiting experience for some (Watt, 1998) and perhaps lead to people behaving in a more 'capsular' manner (de Cauter, 2000). Members of the established white and Pakistani communities interviewed expressed frustration that meaningful mixing with A8 migrants in their neighbourhoods is

largely absent from their lives. The Pakistani community in particular felt that the lack of a common language was a barrier to more meaningful interaction between communities:

Interviewer: You said there are new arrivals in the community - do you mix with the new community?

Respondent 1: We are getting mixed as they are living [in] the same place, but they are not mixing up... There is segregation within the street.

Respondent 2: Language is a problem which is preventing interaction and interrelations. (FG5 men, established Pakistani community)

We can't talk to them as we don't understand them and they don't understand us. (FG6 women, established Pakistani community)

Beyond the barriers that different languages may create, established community members also spoke of a tendency for A8 migrants' to gravitate towards fellow nationals. For example:

Interviewer: Do you mix with Eastern Europeans?

Respondent 1: I think if you didn't know them already they probably just want to stick with their own community.

Respondent 2: It's like at school isn't it?

Respondent 3: We have had a lot [of A8 migrants], we've got a lot that come to our local primary school. We do try don't we.

Respondent 2: They don't want it. I mean you smile at them, that's all we can do, to try and integrate them.

Respondent 3: We always stand outside the door, when we take the kids in we'll have a natter, catch up and see what's going on in the area. And if you try to involve one of these [A8] mothers it's almost like you're into them.

Respondent 2: Yes a brick wall.

Respondent 3: It's like - "What do you want to know about me for"?- The more you try and bring them in, invite them to things, a lot of the time they don't want to know. They throw it back in your face. (FG8 established white community).

Respondent 1: These people [A8 migrants] don't use these [community] centres.

Respondent 2: I think they stick to their own little groups. [...] Like with all new communities they stick to their own with people they know. (FG6 women, established Pakistani community)

The frustrations expressed above by established community members could be perceived simply as a way of deflecting any blame for a lack of meaningful mixing away from themselves and onto the new arrivals. However, members of A8 communities interviewed concurred with this notion of 'sticking-together' with those you know. Furthermore, the Polish women make the related point that civil encounters occur between neighbours, but they do not equate this to a more meaningful type of 'mixing' that is able to break down barriers between people:

Respondent 1: [We mix] with Polish neighbours yes; not with English neighbours. Polish people attract other Polish people, so it is difficult to mix with others.

Respondent 2: With my [Polish] friends from school sometimes we go out together but not with my neighbours. We are polite to them, we say "hello" but that's all.

Respondent 3: We are kind to them [English neighbours], we are waving our hand to the neighbours on the other side of the street, but nothing else, nothing more. (FG3 women, Polish new migrants)

Beyond this notion of living separated lives, it is important to mention that in every focus group conducted with A8 migrants for this study, participants raised the issue of negative encounters with anti-social youths from established communities (see Authors, 2008) that can not, perhaps, be dismissed as merely symptomatic of an 'acceptable' level of urban incivility in diverse society (Phillips and Smith, 2006). Although such encounters are not experienced exclusively by A8 migrants, participants in this study felt that threatening and intimidating behaviour may have been particularly aimed at them because they were perceived to be labour migrants who competed with more established communities for jobs:

Problem is in the local neighbourhood. I can't go to shops they would want to fight with me. They don't like me they say go back to your own country. We need a place, to have some fun and be safe. It is always the young people who give us trouble. (Roma family interview 3, son)

Respondent 2: [Place] is not safe. I was beaten here. When we were returning from work at 5am, we used to live in [road name], there lived English families. Some of them were alcoholics and so every weekend there would be police raids, doors broken down .

Respondent 3: The 9 to 11 year olds kids would be drunk, running riots, throwing stones. So it was not safe. (FG1 Slovak new migrants)

In terms of established community perceptions, one respondent in the service provider focus groups characterised established community members as '*reluctantly accepting*' new A8 migrants in their neighbourhoods. This sentiment of 'reluctance' was deemed to emanate from the economic motivation of the A8 migrants ('*different outlook, different mentality, they are economically driven*') and their willingness to move out of the often inner city communities they initially inhabit should better jobs and housing become available. Another service provider drew on this theme of population churn (Pollard *et al*, 2008) in many of the diverse urban communities where new migrants live, and stated that, '*there's no particular loyalty to communities and that's putting a barrier between them [A8 migrants] and established communities*'. Additionally, a number of service providers were critical of the media's role in fuelling local community tensions (leading at times to quite vociferous anti-migrant sentiments) through misinformed reports that overstated A8 migrants' social entitlements.

This negative view of A8 migrants, however, needs to be further contextualised before it is simply denounced as an expression of simplistic ethnocentric or racist

sentiment. Against the backdrop of socio-economic deprivation that exists in many of the inner city areas where the majority of A8 migrants reside; established community members often perceive new migrants as a source of increased competition for scarce jobs and welfare services that may undermine their own already precarious ability to prosper (Dwyer, 2000). As Favell notes, “where there is conflict with the ‘natives’ over jobs and resources the reaction gets expressed in populist and xenophobic terms” (2008:711). Shades of this have been seen in recent times with the ‘British jobs for British workers’ discourse being articulated in relation to employment disputes in a climate of economic decline, such as the Lindsay oil refinery dispute in early 2009^{vii}.

Linked to the earlier section of the paper where several established community members speculated on potential ways to enhance neighbourhood mixing with new migrants, one member of the white focus group lamented the absence of any actual *spaces* for meaningful encounters and the discovery of ‘common ground’:

Can I just say something. There is a community in a conservative club, there’s a community in the bar but we wouldn’t want even to go to the flats just across the way. And there’s no community. We had a community thing at this place, maybe came in a few times a week. We come to meet a few people but there isn’t any sense of community. There’s very little sense of community anywhere you go. So where is the place you go to meet the other people, the people that you are talking about, and where are you going to communicate with them and where are you going to find common ground? Now if you meet someone like that at football or something then you can find somewhere to meet, a particular area to meet to talk about whatever. But there’s no kind of place where you can come and be with one another. (FG8 established white community)

Segregated workplaces

A significant majority of the A8 participants in this study found themselves in low paid and low skilled jobs. This section examines some of everyday experiences of such employment and how they can form obstacles to both meaningful workplace encounters between migrant and non-migrant groups and to broader enablers of integration, such as language training.

The poor quality of many jobs occupied by new migrant workers is well documented in the migration literature (Anderson *et al* 2006, Mackenzie and Forde 2006, Commission for Rural Communities 2007, Spencer *et al* 2007). Low wage rates often left A8 migrants in this study with little or no option but to work long hours and accept night shifts. Structuring the working week around these anti-social shifts meant that they were unable to participate in activities outside of work during days off due to catching up with normal sleep patterns. The Slovak focus group talked of ‘*living like moles*’ whilst permanently working the night shift on a no choice basis. Others similarly spoke of the ways in which the demands of their work acted to inhibit encounters with others outside their particular ethnic group:

When I worked for the private agency they were giving me the worst hours, late nights, Saturdays, Sundays and they were saying – if you want to make

up your hours, you have to take these hours. (FG3 women, Polish new migrants)

Had no time when I came to England, due to long shifts in the factory, 10 hour days. So no chance to learn English. Because I was working did not learn. (Sister, Roma 1 family interview)

Management is mainly English. On the medium levels we have a mixture of different nations now. On the bottom many Poles and Slovaks, Czechs. [...] English people who start job on the bottom they will leave within 3 or 4 months because it is hard work. Long hours. Small money. Overtime not paid. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

The difficult structure and character of such employment meant that many A8 migrants were keen to find better jobs, however their ability to do so was severely constrained by their current employment. In particular the shift patterns made it difficult for them to attend the English language classes that they felt were central to their abilities to interact with people and to enhance their broader experiences of encounter, and hence feelings of integration, in their new city. In this sense many of the participants expressed feelings of being trapped in poor quality jobs and interpreted their current employment as being one of the key barriers to greater mixing with established community members.

Despite the earlier mentioned ethnically diverse A8 migrant workplaces in this study, occasions when A8 migrants routinely mixed with co-workers of different ethnic or national backgrounds (including any British workers) were the exception rather than the norm on the factory and warehouse floors. Generally, the majority worked with fellow nationals and tended to stick together at work. The Slovaks we interviewed all worked alongside each other as did the majority of Polish men in various employment settings:

At work I did not have any problem with the language because I worked with Poles. The warehouse was divided in half - Polish part and English part. (FG2 men, Polish new migrants)

It is perhaps too crude to suggest that new migrant workers enter low-paid labour sectors, work ferociously hard for a set period with limited encounters with others and are then chewed up and spat out within the de-regulated and flexible neo-liberal UK economy. This scenario seems to apply to some of the migrant workers in this study, most particularly the Slovaks, whose labour mobility appears not to be controlled by themselves but by their employers or employment agencies (Anderson, 2007). Yet across the board, the combination of many employers failing to recognise qualifications attained outside of the UK and the consequent structuring of the majority of A8 migrants into the lowest paid jobs, means that the inclusionary potential of new migrants' current work remains severely limited. When these factors are examined alongside the segregated character of migrants' workspaces; the opportunities for meaningful engagement and integration for many within the workplace are limited. Additionally, the extent to which paid work occupies a large proportion of migrant workers lives means that mixing outside of the workplace is also constrained by the structure of their current working lives. The restrictions this

places on the ability of these workers to learn English and thus attain better jobs means that, in the short term at least, many A8 migrants are trapped in poor quality jobs.

The social practice of encountering 'others' is, like integration, a two-way process that requires an element of co-operation on the part of host communities (Castles *et al.* 2002). This may not be forthcoming in the type of A8 migrant workplaces of this study for several reasons. First, established workers are more likely to occupy line management or supervisory positions and may, for a variety of reasons, favour those who they are used to working with which again limits the space for encountering others (see more on workplace hierarchies in Authors, 2009). Second, established workers may resent the A8 newcomers in their midst, particularly when they are praised by employers (as in our study) for their superior work ethic, i.e. '*going the extra mile*' (KI4 services manager, logistics/distribution company) and '*being very obliging*' (KI5 training manager, transport company) compared to the '*mollycoddled*' (KI2 manager, hotel/hospitality sector) pool of pre-existing workers. A third reason why mixing and encounters between new migrants and established workers might be somewhat superficial, is linked to ideas of the 'self-segregation' of particular groups that were raised in the introduction to this paper. Employers in this study were keen to stress that all workers, regardless of their ethnic background, were treated equally. As managers of diverse workforces they were aware of their duty to actively promote a discrimination free working environment, but they all commented on the preference for most A8 migrants to gravitate towards their fellow nationals at work. KI5 (a training manager for a transport company), for example, stated that initially at least new A8 workers tended to '*stick together*'. Others noted that, although a reduction in the tendency to self-segregate can occur over time, the warehouse or factory floor is rarely a site for meaningful interactions that traverse ethnic or national lines:

You get the pockets of indigenous population who won't talk to people with a different accent. You've got Polish people who just want to come to work and not integrate. [...] And in fairness, there's no hostility, there's just a lack of integration. (KI4 services manager logistics/distribution company)

[The] Polish, because they are quite cliquey, it alienates other people in their department. So one of the things we have done is we've banned them talking in their own language. We've said when they are on their breaks, they are not in our employment, it's their own time they can speak however they like. But if they are on public corridors, in the restaurant or anywhere then they need to speak English. (KI2 manager, hotel/hospitality company)

Such cultural clustering, which often relates to structural inequalities in settlement and employment patterns, is a noted feature of many post-migration experiences (Musterd, 2003; Burholt, 2004). Studies of previous groups of migrants have demonstrated how migration brings about a process of rebuilding communities and social networks in new locations, often around shared cultural practices, ethnic communities and religious organisations (Moriarty and Butt, 2004; Maynard *et al.*, 2008). The tendency of A8 migrants to gravitate towards fellow nationals in the workplace most likely represents a pragmatic coping strategy in the light of sociospatial inequalities rather than a rejection *per se* of a desire to mix and integrate with others. Some A8 migrants in our study with limited English language abilities felt trapped in particular jobs and

discriminated against; reflecting the spatially segregated and racialised geographies that emerge from people's inability to cope with everyday encounters of difference (Smith, 1993; Herbert *et al*, 2008). 'Sticking together' with those who speak the same language and share everyday pressures can be a vital source of informal support. Also, for those A8 migrants who only plan for short, transitory periods of working in the UK, mixing more widely with other groups in the workplace may be perceived to have little intrinsic value.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of this paper has been to firstly explore what the enhanced, "temporary and circular migration trends" (Favell, 2008:706) of A8 migrants mean for grounded experiences of interactions between immigrants and host communities. Secondly, the paper aimed to explore such interactions in terms of 'everyday encounters' in both neighbourhood and work spaces and asked whether such spatio-temporal practices and experiences serve to enhance or inhibit the building of 'good relations' between established communities and newly resident A8 migrants in a multicultural city.

There is much literature around the politics and practices of living together in diverse multicultural cities and speculation abounds as to how encounters can enhance understanding of difference, promote harmonious juxtaposed lives and generally be constitutive of 'good relations' (Keith, 2005; Simonsen, 2008b; Amin, 2002, 2004, 2006; Valentine, 2008). Neighbourhood and workplaces have been explored in this paper as potential sites of intercultural exchange between A8 migrants and established community members. Such social interactions are framed within the literature on everydayness and mundane geographies (Ley, 1977; De Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1990; Harrison, 2000; Seigworth and Gardiner, 2004; Binnie *et al* 2007) to explore whether banal everyday mixing and 'prosaic negotiations' (Amin, 2002:969) can enhance meaningful encounters and eventually contribute to positive integration experiences. The conclusions are somewhat mixed and nuanced, reflecting the complex character of mundane social life.

Neighbourhoods and workplaces clearly have the *potential* to foster meaningful 'everyday encounters' and have been reported to do so by some of our participants at particular times and in particular places. Certain experiences are evocative of Amin's (2006:1013) hopeful 'culture of care and regard' for otherness where people learn to 'live with, perhaps even value difference'. Both A8 migrants and established community members in this study discussed notable encounters with 'others' that were on occasions at the very least civil (Fyfe *et al*, 2006; Boyd, 2006) and lubricating of proximate living; and at best were generative of deeper interaction and meaningful engagement with 'strangers'. Such 'strange encounters' (Ahmed, 2000) have been reported to occur in the 'grey' or interstitial areas of everyday life such as on the factory floor, in shops, on the street and in the school playground. The arguable banality of these 'everyday encounters' (Laurier and Philo, 2006) does not mean that they do not *matter*; in fact the way that a minority of participants in our study spoke of such encounters perhaps begins to chime with Giddens' (1991) suggestion that banality allows us to 'hold things together' and give us ontological security.

However, the majority of participants in this study outlined a quite different set of encounters that emerged from their experiences of living side by side. Such encounters, or more specifically the evident lack of meaningful engagement between established communities and A8 migrants, generally failed to produce constructive or generative interactions. These findings support Valentine's suggestion that, "proximity does not relate to meaningful contact" (2008:334) and may cultivate little beyond superficial tolerance. Diverse groups of people can share the same space but, as she argues, it is a mistake to make the, "naïve assumption that contact with 'others' necessarily translates into respect for difference" (2008:325). We found that the common spaces of neighbourhood and work shared by many A8 migrants and established community members facilitated everyday encounters that routinely ranged from negative experiences and structurally enforced 'absences' of interaction through to more active strategies of *withdrawal* from mixing with members of 'other' communities. Such a depiction leads us to conclude that for some people these everyday places create encounters that allow different groups to merely 'tolerate' each other (with, as Wemyss (2006) notes, associated expressions of power). Indeed, sometimes this inability or unwillingness to engage with 'others', this lack of encounters, emerge as more pernicious manifestations of mutual mistrust and resentment. For many of our A8 participants therefore; neighbourhood and workplace experiences did not open up spaces for 'meaningful engagement' with established community members that were capable of breaking down stereotypes and barriers to integration.

In order to avoid ending this paper on such a negative note, we offer a final more optimistic point about 'change' and the non-fixity of people's perspectives when encountering others that emerged from our fieldwork:

Respondent 1: We tolerate them [A8 migrants].

Interviewer: It's an interesting word tolerate. Do you just think, they are here. Is it just tolerate or is it, they are welcome, or what? There is a difference isn't there?

Respondent 1: I have two split personalities on this. I was brought up by my family to believe the quotation that goes, 'when in Rome do as the Romans do'. So when somebody comes to this country half of me thinks, well they should behave like we do. But there's another half of me that goes, this country is a bastardised nation by the Saxons, the Normans, the Romans, the French. Our language is bastardised like two language mixed together, French and Anglo Saxon mixed together. So basically we are a mixture of lots of different cultures which has made our culture. So this is an ongoing process. So the more cultures we add to it the more diverse we become. We will change because we've always changed.

Respondent 2: It's going to get to a point one day where all governments agree that it's not a case of America, England France, all the rest of it. It's going to have to come to a point, because no country in this world is just one set [of people]. Sorry, but we created boats and planes, we skipped over [to different places] and we've got into everybody else. To me it's not different countries. That doesn't exist any more. We are a planet. (FG8 established white community)

The above quote is indicative of the, at times, contradictory reaction of established communities to the A8 migrants that had recently arrived to live and work alongside them. It is illustrative of recognition that successive waves of migration have led to changes in the way that we define ourselves and perhaps hints that more positive everyday encounters that can and may emerge from the era of enhanced global mobility that is part and parcel of the fabric of contemporary society.

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ⁱ The A8 states are: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Maltese and Cypriot nationals were also part of the 2004 enlargement. They have full freedom of movement rights and are not required to register as workers.

ⁱⁱ All these terms are acknowledged to be contested, but we are trying to convey Ahmed's (2000) notion of cities increasingly experiencing 'strangers' becoming incorporated into the 'we' of the nation, and the inevitability of negotiating multiplicity in cities (Massey, 2005).

ⁱⁱⁱ The term 'integration' is not understood or deployed in an unproblematic way. Integration is acknowledged to cover many realms (for example, social, political, economic, cultural) and is further contested in terms of its *meaning* (Vaiou and Stratigaki, 2008; Castles *et al*, 2002; Vertovec *et al*, 2002). We are using the term

here in a somewhat stylised ‘end-point’ way to echo how policy makers tend to project an idealised picture of a fully integrated new migrant. As will become clear, however, we are actually more interested in the everyday encounters between new migrants and host community members that contribute to, or undermine, incremental processes of integration.

^{iv} It was necessary to modify our original approach in order to gain the trust of the Roma participants. Initially we had intended to hold a focus group with eight to ten participants. However, due to previous negative experiences in their country of origin they would only agree to being interviewed in their own homes following our introduction by a trusted community member. Similarly, they also did not want interviews to be recorded verbatim. Consequently two members of the research team conducted three interviews in the participants’ homes, one initiated conversations the other took extensive field notes of discussions.

^v See Authors (2008) for a fuller description of methods and tables of respondents. (citation anonymised for referees).

^{vi} As used by the Community Cohesion Review Team (2001) in the light of the urban disturbances in some northern British cities in 2001 and also sensationally by Trevor Phillips in 2005.

^{vii} This dispute first flared up on 28 January 2009 when British workers and their unions discovered that jobs were going to be subcontracted to foreign workers. They were concerned that UK workers were going to be denied the right to carry out the work. The dispute fast escalated into mass sympathy protests across the UK amid times of recession.